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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 043800

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2033
TAGS: KNNP PREL PARM NK SY TU

SUBJECT: (S) RESPONSE TO TURKEY ON SUSPECT NORTH KOREAN FLIGHT

REF: A. STATE 034278
1B. STATE 013637
1C. STATE 010930
1D. ANKARA 000438
1E. CARL SIEBENTRITT EMAIL 4/24

Classified By: EUR/PRA Director Anita Friedt for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST

11. (S/Rel Turkey) Post is instructed to immediately approach appropriate host government officials to discuss North Korea's request for overflight permission of a charter Air Koryo flight from Pyongyang to Damascus. Turkish officials should be encouraged to continue to request that the aircraft land for inspection as a condition for granting clearance. Washington has been tracking this planned flight and has additional scheduling details to share. Post may draw from Objectives, Background, and non-paper below, as appropriate.

OBJECTIVES

12. (S) Drawing from paragraphs 3 and 4, Post is requested to pursue the following objectives:

-- Thank Turkish officials for their continuing vigilance and cooperation on this issue of potential proliferation concern, and note that this is the type of cooperation we encourage as Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) partners.

-- Remind host government that per previous demarches on similar flights, Air Koryo flights that are not regularly scheduled are unusual and are a cause for concern.

-- Remind host government that North Korea and Syria have a history of cooperation on nuclear and missile related projects.

-- Request host government to detain any suspicious cargo for further investigation to ensure it is not in violation of UNSCR 1718 or could otherwise contribute to a program of proliferation concern in Syria.

-- Request that Turkish officials continue to provide information that they find regarding this flight or any future flights of concern.

--Acknowledge difference in call signs between Turkey's information and U.S. information and indicate that we believe this is the same flight.

BACKGROUND

13. (S/Rel Turkey) Since February Washington has been tracking an Air Koryo charter flight, which has been

rescheduled multiple times, intending to fly from Pyongyang, North Korea to Damascus, Syria. Washington is concerned that this flight may be intended to carry cargo in violation of UNSCR 1718 (Refs A, B, and C). In March, Turkey received an overflight clearance request for an Air Koryo flight scheduled for March 11 from Pyongyang to Damascus. The Turks requested the aircraft land for inspection as a condition for granting overflight (Ref D). Washington has details on this flight to share with Turkey in the attached non-paper.

¶4. (S/Rel Turkey) On April 24, Turkish officials informed Washington that North Korea has again requested overflight permission for an Air Koryo flight on April 28. Washington welcomed the news that Turkish officials plan to treat this flight as suspicious. Consistent with our ongoing concerns about this activity, Washington again urges Turkey, if it has not already done so, to request the aircraft land for inspection as a condition for granting overflight. As in the previous cases, we do not have any specific information to share with Turkish officials regarding this flight. Nevertheless, Washington continues to have concerns about this activity and believes that continued diplomatic efforts are warranted to further deter North Korea from using such flights to transport illicit cargo.

NON-PAPER

¶5. (S/Rel Turkey)

-- We have some further information on the flight of serious proliferation concern that has requested overflight of your territory as it transits to and from Syria and may be in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718.

--According to our information, an Il-62 transport aircraft belonging to the North Korean airline Air Koryo is scheduled to depart North Korea for Iran and Syria on 28 April 2008. The call sign for this flight is JS621.

-- The aircraft is due to depart Syria on 1 May 2008 and stop again in Iran en route back to the DPRK. The call sign for this flight is JS622.

-- The suspected time-table for these flights is as follows:

-- Flight A; Il-62 Call Sign JS621.
--28 April 2008, 0001, Depart Pyongyang
--28 April 2008, 0941, Arrive Tehran
--28 April 2008, 1140, Depart Tehran
--28 April 2008, 1420, Arrive Damascus

-- Flight B; Il-62 Call Sign JS622
--1 May 2008; 0900, Depart Damascus
--1 May 2008; 1130, Arrive Tehran
--1 May 2008; 1330, Depart Tehran
--1 May 2008; 2220, Arrive Pyongyang

-- We request, if you have not already done so, that you inform Air Koryo that you will only provide overflight clearance contingent upon full inspection of the aircraft and cargo and grant any fueling stop by this flight and prepare to inspect the cargo immediately upon landing.

End non-paper

POINT OF CONTACT

¶5. (U) Post should report results by April 28, 2008. Washington point of contact for follow-up information is Matthew Zartman, (202) 647-7588, zartmanml@state.sgov.gov. Please slug all responses for EAP, EUR, ISN, NEA, and T. Washington appreciates Post's continued assistance on this matter.

RICE

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End Cable Text